

News Release

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Ringling in accolades for Edmonton emergency dispatchers

Edmonton, April 14, 2008 – Helping to deliver a baby on the side of the road was just another day at the office for Tamara Boechler. The communications specialist, who works for the City of Edmonton's Emergency Communications Centre, says her years of training and experience kicked in the moment she heard the panic-stricken Dad on the phone.

"I just told him to pull over and walked him through the steps until paramedics arrived," says Tamara, a communications specialist for over 12 years. "It's truly an amazing experience when all of your training comes together like that and you can be part of something so special."

Every day, Edmonton's emergency communications specialists, or dispatchers as they are more commonly known, help save lives and ensure emergency personnel are safe. The City of Edmonton will recognize these unsung heroes during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, April 13 - 19, 2008.

Communications specialists with the Emergency Communications Centre and Edmonton Police Service dispatch staff are often the first point of contact during a crisis. These highly-trained individuals not only dispatch the appropriate emergency services, they also provide valuable instructions to the caller while they wait for help to arrive.

"Because they work behind the scenes, our personnel are often the unsung heroes of emergency services," says Devon Card, Branch Manager of Operational Services. "Our communications specialists are a fundamental link for firefighters and paramedics. By monitoring their activities, they are able to provide emergency responders with information and resources and help ensure their safety on scene."

When citizens telephone for help, they initially speak with Edmonton Police Service 9-1-1 operators, who then transfer the call to the appropriate emergency service – a crucial part of the 9-1-1 process says Edmonton Police Chief Mike Boyd. "We are very proud of all of our Dispatch Center staff. Our 9-1-1 operators and call evaluators often serve as our first point of contact with the public. Often the information they provide can mean the difference between life and death for our officers, and the citizens they're sworn to protect."

Edmonton's Emergency Communications Centre employs 44 emergency communications staff members and seven technical services staff members. The Edmonton Police Service has 133 people working in their Communications Section (sworn and non-sworn).

National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week was first conceived by the Contra Costa County (Calif.) Sheriff's Office in 1981. The United States Congress formally proclaimed the third week of April as "National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week" starting in 1992. It became permanent, without the need for yearly introduction in 1994. This is the first year that the City of Edmonton has officially participated in this event.

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About Edmonton:

This is a city alive with energy and boundless opportunity - a growing economic powerhouse where business thrives and more than a million lives enjoy the freedom to explore, experiment, experience, excel and expect the most out of every day. A place like no other, Edmonton is filled with surprises great and small and a calendar packed with artistic, sporting, theatrical and cultural celebration.

For more information on Edmonton, please visit our website at: www.edmonton.ca.

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